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SUBJECT: FORMER POLICE GENERAL SAYS RAFSANJANI UP, AHMADINEJAD DOWN

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CLASSIFIED BY: Jillian L. Burns, Director, Iran Regional
Presence Office, Dubai, UAE.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

1.(S/NF) Summary: A retired police general told IRPO Director December 19 that he sees Rafsanjani and Qalibaf on the up-swing in Iran, and Ahmadinejad on his way out. He warned against outside attack, saying that if hardliners are left alone to face the problems they are creating in the country, they will fall. An outside attack, however, would be welcomed by hardliners because it would allow them to solidify their hold on power. At the same time, he said Iran is trying to manage the level of violence in Iraq to deter a follow-on US attack against Iran, while at the same time avoiding a wider Sunni-Shia conflict. This apparent contradiction may stem from a differentiation between an aerial attack of short duration and a full-scale invasion by US ground troops, or it may be that these views are symptomatic of paradoxes in Iranian thinking. In any case, his prediction of a Rafsanjani resurgence post-election and an Ahmadinejad fall echo views of other contacts in the broader Rafsanjani camp. End summary

2.(S/NF) An Iranian-American contact arranged a meeting December 19 with a retired police general, who had worked in the police legal office before retiring. When the former official was asked why he agreed to meet IRPO, he said to help save his country. He said when he came to Dubai a few days earlier, he was moved to tears by the city's development. He hadn't been in Dubai in close to 30 years, when the city had been "nothing." Iran should look like Dubai today, he said. People in Iran are very unhappy, looking for a liberator from the small group that has taken over the country. Although he is retired, he claims to have continuing contacts with police and intelligence officers through his involvement in a Tehran social organization.

Welcome conflict~.

3.(S/NF) As do many contacts, the retired general maintained that this government would welcome an outside attack. An attack would unite the people, he said, and allow the government to divert attention from the bad economic situation. He claimed that absent confrontation, the current leaders will fall, out-maneuvered by Expediency Council Chair Rafsanjani and former President Khatami. He said he did not oppose sanctions that hit the government economically. He claimed the Iranian people

understand that their government is responsible for the current tensions and they know that the government sends Hizballah and Hamas money. Therefore, they won't blame the US for sanctions.

Or not???

4.(S/NF) The former police general claimed that Iran is serious about stopping violence in Iraq and that Iran is very afraid of the consequences of this violence, but then qualified Iran's intentions. The government will attempt to prevent a wider war between Shia and Sunnis, and it recognizes Saudi Arabia's fears that Muqtada al-Sadr is assuming a Nasser-type persona in the region. On the other hand, Iran has seen the capability of the US military and does not want to be next. Therefore, it will offer some help on Iraq, but he sees little chance at full US-Iran cooperation in Iran. He claimed Talabani cried for help in Tehran, but Iran is not keeping its promises to him. He described Iran's policy in Iraq as no peace, but no big war, and called it a "bad" policy.

View of internal politics

5.(S/NF) The Iranian people are not organized, said the former official, otherwise they could demand change. He said the poor are the most dissatisfied, including the lower ranks of the IRGC, because of inflation and economic hardship in the country. He said, for instance, the price of meat went up 20 percent in one month. When asked why IRGC ranks would be dissatisfied given that they receive subsidized food, he said supplies are spotty and the quality is bad.

6.(S/NF) He maintained that the country is divided into two main factions - fundamentalists and moderates. Within the fundamentalists are three sub-groups: 1) the Mesbah-Yazdi/Ahmadinejad group; 2) supporters of the Supreme Leader and Mehdi HYPERLINK

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"<http://opensource.dni.sgov.gov/cgi-bin/cq.cgi> @rware.env?CQ_CUR_DOCUMENT=1&CQ_USER_NAME=Mos2Bookmark&CQ_PASSWORD=Document&CQ_LOGIN=Yes&CQ_DO_QUERY=Yes&CQ_CUR_LIBRARY=ALL &CQ_QUERY_STRING.DOCUMENT_ID=IAP20061221950040&CQ_MOS2_DO_QUERY_B_OOKMARK_ARTICLE=Yes&TrackDocID=IAP20061221950040" \\1 "HIT0003#HIT0003" Chamran, a principle-ist and top vote getter in the Tehran municipal election; and 3) opponents of IRGC/Baseej role in politics, who largely support Rafsanjani. He divided the moderate camp into two sub-groups: 1) supporters of former Tehran Mayor Karbashchi; and 2) supporters of Khatami.

7.(S/NF) The former official said the big turnout in the elections was the result of the rivalry between Mesbah-Yazdi and Rafsanjani. He claimed reformers and Rafsanjani are the winners, and Ahmadinejad is the loser in the December 15 elections. He noted that Khatami's brother Ahmad won a Kerman Province seat in the Assembly of Experts. Rafsanjani still has a great deal of influence, he said, and people think he can save the country. The source, obviously pro-Rafsanjani, described Rafsanjani as pro-Western and said he wants to draw back European money that is starting to steer away from Iran. The source claimed that half of the IRGC support Rafsanjani and that IRGC support was the reason behind Rafsanjani's high vote count in Tehran.

Predicting Ahmadinejad's fall

8.(S/NF) The former official predicted (as have other contacts with a similar political orientation) that Ahmadinejad is on his way out. His fall may be accelerated, the source said, if the new Tehran municipal council launches an investigation against him for corruption. The source claimed that USD 350 million disappeared from the city budget under then mayor Ahmadinejad, but until now, the city council had not investigated Ahmadinejad because the president threatened to launch other investigations.

(Note: He also claimed that after the student protests against Ahmadinejad at Amir Kabir University just prior to the December elections, the authorities arrested a person at the television station for airing video of the incident. He also said a few of the student protesters were arrested and some escaped. Endnote)

9.(S/NF) The former official echoed others' views that the position of Tehran mayor is a launching pad for the next president. He maintained that in the Ahmadinejad-Qalibaf rivalry, Ahmadinejad has the Supreme Leader's support and Tehran Mayor Qalibaf (also former IRGC and former head of the LEF) has Rafsanjani's support. He maintained that Qalibaf also has support among the IRGC and the police. (Note: the source claimed that even though IRGC officials now head the police, career police counselors make the actual decisions.) He said Qalibaf also has the support of Ayatollah Abbas Va'ez-Tabasi (Note: the head of the powerful Imam Reza Endowment in Mashhad, viewed as a mainstream traditionalist. Endnote). He maintained that among Qalibaf's accomplishments as head of the LEF was computerizing the organization, and since becoming mayor of Tehran, he finished the IT modernization project that Karbashchi had started.

Terrorism links

10.(S/NF) The former police official claims that at the time of the US invasion of Afghanistan, the IRGC allowed 350 Al-Qaida, mostly Egyptians and Saudis, to escape through Iranian territory. They traveled on "mountain bikes" through the Kavir-e Lut desert and left from Mehrabad airport in Tehran. He does not know what happened to them from there. Later, he said, the MOIS gathered up a number of Al-Qaida and turned them over to foreign governments. Now, he claimed, Al-Qaida leaders are in Iran but are not in prison. They are, however, in one place and under surveillance and cannot leave the country. The Iranians reportedly told them they are better off staying in Iran. He believes the government views them as leverage (presumably as a bargaining chip with the US). He also claimed that after the war, Iranians captured many Taliban and eventually developed friendly relations with them. He asserted that some Taliban were or are in Iran, including in Damavand and in Tehran, under IRGC surveillance.

11.(S/NF) The former official also claimed that during the summer war in Lebanon, "US jets" intercepted an Iranian plane to Syria, suspecting it of carrying weapons. Although it was the wrong plane, he claimed Iran stopped using planes to carry

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resupplies. Instead, they hide equipment and explosives in cooking oil transported through the Iraqi province of Ilam, a Shia region, to Lebanon.

Biographic note

12.(S/NF) The former official said he retired at the rank of general five years ago from the police but stayed on working another two years. He has a law degree and passed the police academy, and worked most recently in the police's legal office. He said he served in the police under the Shah and was arrested for protesting against wrongful detentions. He then reportedly transferred to the West European and US section of the immigration office. He claims, and the Iranian-American agrees, that he was the unnamed Iranian official who helped Betty Mahmoudi leave Iran with her daughter in the mid 1980s, a story made famous by the book and movie, "Not without My Daughter." He says he directed them to a border crossing point where a friend worked who let them pass and ensured the Kurds would not trouble them. He also said that when news leaked of National Security Advisor McFarlane and Oliver North's trip to Tehran in 1986, he and the rest of the immigration office were taken to prison and beaten, accused of leaking the information. He said that McFarlane was almost arrested. He said that after that incident, most of the police officers who staffed the

immigration office were replaced by intelligence officers.

Comment

13.(S/NF) The information offered by the official is largely single source, but the allegations of Iran's relations with Al-Qaida and Taliban echo what is in the press. His views of Rafsanjani's resurgence to Ahmadinejad's detriment echo those of other Rafsanjani supporters or moderate reformers, who had largely written off Rafsanjani a few months ago. Whether this represents a real trend or wishful thinking is not yet clear. The apparent contradiction in whether the current leadership would welcome or fears conflict with the US is worth exploring with other contacts, but we suspect that at the end of the day, the majority of those in power prefer a continued state of tension but not outright conflict with the US.

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